

Vermont's Congressional Delegation — Senator Patrick Leahy (D), Senator Bernie Sanders (I) and Congressman Peter Welch (D) — said Wednesday that ten Vermont farms and rural businesses will share almost \$100,000 in grants through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to launch energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects.

Vermont farms and businesses are receiving \$96,754 in grants, divided across ten projects. Foxchair Mountain Craftsmen of Springfield; Whitney Elms LLC of Vernon; and Vermont Homestead LLC of Putney each will get grants of \$16,600 to install photovoltaic solar generating systems. Seven Vermont farms and businesses are receiving a total of \$46,774 to make energy efficiency improvements to their operations.

Grants across the nation totaling \$11.6 million were announced Wednesday by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack as part of President Obama's rural economic bus tour in the Midwest. Chartered under the 2008 Farm Bill, the REAP Program helps farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses to buy and install renewable energy systems and to make energy-efficiency improvements.

Leahy, the most senior member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, "REAP loans and grants help Vermont farms and small businesses boost their bottom lines and improve production. On farms and in rural businesses, embedding energy conservation into the cost stream promotes economic growth through steady savings, while reducing our dependence on fossil fuels."

Sanders said, "These investments in energy efficiency and sustainable energy will not only help Vermonters save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they also will help create desperately-needed jobs."

Welch, the author of the Home Star Energy Efficiency Act that would create 170,000 jobs retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient, said, "This is great news for Vermont rural businesses and farmers. Investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy is a win-win-win: It creates jobs, saves people money and is good for the environment. We need to make more of these common sense investments to put Americans back to work and jump start our struggling economy."

Vilsack said, "These investments enable our farmers, ranchers and rural small business owners to develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements that will save them thousands of dollars in energy costs each year," Vilsack said. "This funding is an important part of the Obama Administration's plan to conserve natural resources, create jobs and lead our country on the path to becoming more energy independent